

# Winged Euonymus or Burning Bush

## *Euonymus alatus*

Staff-tree Family (Celastraceae)

**Description:** Winged Euonymus is a deciduous shrub that averages 6 to 9 feet in height but is capable of reaching 15 feet. It has opposite, simple, elliptical toothed leaves which turn bright scarlet in autumn. Among its distinctive features are the prominently corky-winged green and brown twigs. The fruit is a cluster of pods, usually four, which are quite showy. These purple fruits split open when ripe revealing the bright red inner parts.

**Origin:** Native to eastern Asia, winged Euonymus was brought to the United States during the mid-nineteenth century and has been widely planted as an ornamental. A dwarf variety, *compactus*, is a popular hedge-forming plant. Winged Euonymus is used primarily as foundation plantings, hedges, and highway plantings. It is widely disseminated by wildlife species, which spread the seeds in their droppings.

**Habitat:** Winged Euonymus grows in a variety of soil conditions and spreads readily from cultivation into old fields, open woods, and mature second growth forests.

**Why is it a problem?** In open woodlands, winged Euonymus replaces native shrubs. In areas where it forms dense monotypic stands, it reduces habitat diversity. The root system forms a dense mat just below the soil

surface. The combination of the dense shade provided and the tight root system makes survival of other plants beneath Euonymus impossible.

**Management:** Hand pulling sprouts and saplings can be effective. Larger shrubs may require heavy equipment for eradication of the plant. Use of herbicides on cut stumps and young plants may also be effective.

### **Alternatives:**

#### For persistent berries:

*Aronia arbutifolia* (Red Chokeberry)  
- also bright fall color

*Ilex verticillata* (Winterberry)

*Viburnum trilobum* (Highbush  
Cranberry)

#### For fall foliage/winter interest:

*Cornus amomum* (Silky Dogwood) –  
also a fall food source

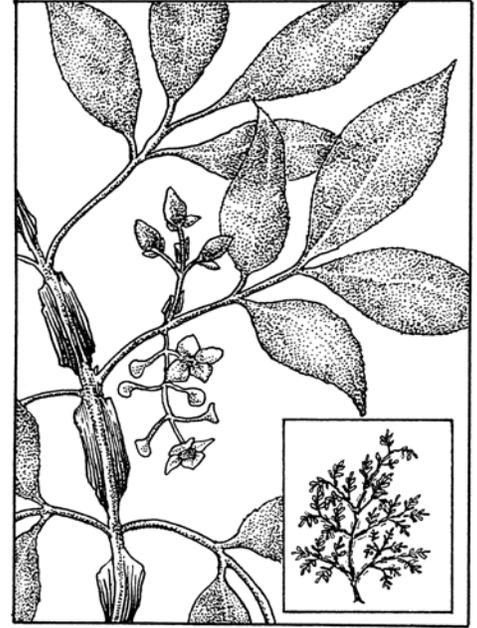


Illustration by E. Farnsworth

*Cornus sericea* (Red Twig  
Dogwood) – also a fall food source

*Vaccinium corymbosum* (Highbush  
Blueberry) – also a summer food  
source

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